

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-13 ACDA-12 TRSE-00 /084 W

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FM USMISSION USBERLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5491

INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUESSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 USBERLIN 2679

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, WB

SUBJECT: INFAS POLL SHOWS STOBBE'S AND BERLIN SPD'S POPULARITY
ON THE RISE

REF: USBER 2440

SUMMARY: RECENT INFAS PUBLIC OPINION POLLS SHOW THE BERLIN
SPD HAS REPLACED THE CDU AS THE MOST POPULAR PARTY IN
BERLIN. GOVERNING MAYOR STOBBE'S PERSONAL POPULARITY AND
INTERNAL SPD UNITY ARE SEEN TO BE THE MAJOR REASONS FOR THE
SPD'S MUCH IMPROVED SHOWING. A FEW MINOR CLUDS CAN BE
SEEN ON THE PARTY'S AND GOVERNMENT'S HORIZONS AT PRESENT,
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AND PARTY AND SENAT OFFICIALS CAUTION AGAINST SEEING A TREND
IN THE PUBLIC OPINION POLL FIGURES. THEY WARN THAT A LOT
CAN HAPPEN BETWEEN NOW AND THE BERLIN LAND ELECTIONS
18 MONTHS FROM NOW, BUT ARE NONETHELESS VERY ENCOURAGED.
END SUMMARY.

1. A PRIVATELY COMMISSIONED PUBLIC OPINION POLL CONDUCTED

FOR THE BERLIN SENAT BY THE BONN-BASED INSTITUTE FOR APPLIED SOCIAL STUDIES (INFAS) TAKEN IN SEPTEMBER GIVES GOVERNING MAYOR STOBBE A FAVORABLE POPULARITY RATING OF 60 PER CENT, ASTONISHINGLY HIGH WHEN ONE CONSIDERS HE WAS NOT WIDELY KNOWN BY THE BERLIN POPULACE WHEN HE TOOK OFFICE IN MAY. THE SAME INFAS POLL SHOW THE BERLIN SPD TO HAVE RALLIED SIGNIFICANTLY FROM ITS LOW POINT IN THE PERIOD JUST PRIOR TO KLAUS SCHUETZ' RESIGNATION. ACCORDING TO INFAS THE SPD, WHICH HAD SUNK TO 34 PER CENT IN LATE APRIL, IS NOW FAVORED BY 43 PER CENT OF THE SAMPLE OF VOTERS TAKEN. AT THE SAME TIME, THE BERLIN CDU WHICH HAD BEEN HOVERING AROUND 43 TO 45 PERCENT IN THE PUBLIC OPINION POLLS DURING THE LATE SPRING SWITCHED POSITIONS WITH THE SPD AND DROPPED TO A 34 PER CENT RATING.

2. BOTH BERLIN SPD AND SENIOR SENAT OFFICIALS ARE ENCOURAGED BY THE RESULTS OF THE LATEST POLL, BUT ARE CAUTIOUS NOT TO OVEREMPHASIZE THEM AT THIS PINT. SENAT SPOKESMAN SOETJE TOLD MISSION SENAT LIAISON OFFICER THAT HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES WERE PLEASANTLY SURPRISED BY THE INFAS RESULTS, WHICH WERE FAR BETTER THAN HAD BEEN EXPECTED. THE GENERAL FEELING IN RATHAUS SCHOENEBERG IS THAT THE DIRECTION AND PACE SET BY GOVERNING MAYOR STOBBE HAS BEEN THE KEY FACTOR FOR THE SPD'S GOOD SHOWING. SOETJE AND A SENIOR SPD PARLIAMENTARIAN ALSO AGREED THAT THE PRESENT UNITY WITHIN THE BERLIN

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SPD IS HELPING THE PARTY'S PUBLIC IMAGE.

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3. THE REASONS FOR THE PARTY HAVING SUDDENLY FOUND IT POSSIBLE TO PATCH UP ITS INTERNAL DIFFERENCES, WHICH FOR THE BETTER PART OF THE 18 MONTHS PRIOR TO LAST MAY HAD BEEN SYSTEMATICALLY DESTROYING THE PARTY'S EFFEC-TIVENESS, ARE VARIED. SOME PARTY OFFICIALS HAVE COM-MENTED THAT BOTH THE LEFT AND RIGHT WINGS OF THE PARTY HAVE SIMPLY RECOGNIZED THE NEED TO RECONCILE THEIR DIFFERENCES IF THE PARTY IS TO BUILD IN TIME TO WIN BACK THE POSITION OF BERLIN'S LARGEST PARTY IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES IN THE MARCH, 1979 EFLECTIONS. OTHER PARTY OBSERVERS HAVE NOTED THAT STOBBE, A MAN BASICALLY IDENTIFIED WITHE RIGHT WING OF THE PARTY, HAS GAINED FAVOR WITH THE LEFT BY ADOPTING TO A CON-CONFIDENTIAL

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SIDERABLE EXTENT THE LEFT WING'S OWN POLITICAL PROGRAM FOR DEALING WITH THE CITY'S INTERNAL (COMMUNAL) PROBLEMS. PERHAPS A THIRD REASON FOR THE PRESENT PARTY UNITY CAN BE TRACED TO THE SPD'S HAVING ACCEPTED, AT GOVERNING MAYOR STOBBE'S REQUEST, FORMER SENATOR FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY GERD LOEFFLER TO SERVE AS THE FULL TIME CHAIRMAN OF THE BERLIN SPD. HERE HOWEVER, THERE ARE SOME CONFLICTING ESTIMATES. CLEARLY, LOEFFLER HAS DONE A LOT OF WORK AT THE GRASS ROOTS LEVEL AND HAS WORKED HARD TO REBUILD PARTY CONFIDENCE. THAT HE HAS HAD SOME SUCCESS CAN BE DEMONSTRATED BY THE LAST SPD PARTEITAG, THE MOST SMOOTHLY RUN ONE IN YEARS (REFTEL). ON THE OTHER HAND, IT HAS BEEN RUMORED THAT LOEFFLER, WHO IS STILL NOT ACCEPTED BY THE LEFT WING, IS A POOR MANAGER, AND IS INCREASINGLY BECOMING SOMETHING OF A BOTTLENECK IN THE PARTY DECISION MAKING MACHINERY.

4. COMMENT: IT IS STILL A VERY LONG TIME UNTIL BERLIN'S LAND ELECTIONS, BUT THE SPD RECOGNIZES IT HAS A LOT OF CATCHING UP TO DO IT IS TO REGAIN THE NUMBER ONE POSITION IN BERLIN. CONSEQUENTLY, PARTY SENAT OFFICIALS ARE VERY CHEERED BY THE EARLY POSITIVE SIGNS OF THE INFAS POLL. THEY ARE QUICK TO POINT OUT, HOWEVER, THAT PUBLIC OPINION IS VERY FLUID AT PRESENT AND THAT THE RECENT REVERSAL OF POSITIONS BY THE SPD AND CDU COULD EASILY FLIP-FLOP BACK THE OTHER WAY IF PROBLEMS AGAIN DEVELOP BETWEEN THE SPD'S LEFT AND RIGHT WINGS AND/OR THE GOVERNING MAYOR AND SENAT EXPERIENCE ANY SERIOUS POLITICAL SETBACKS. WITHIN THE SPD ITSELF THERE ARE NO IMMEDIATELY FORESEEABLE PROBLEMS BREWING. ALTHOUGH THE LEADER OF THE LEFT WING SENATOR FOR BUILDING AND HOUSING HARRY RISTOCK, IS KNOWN TO DISLIKE PARTY CHAIRMAN LOEFFLER, WHOM RISTOCK CONSIDERS TO BE AN UNINSPIRED AND UNIN-
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SPRING TECHNOCRAT, HE HAS INDICATED A WILLINGNESS TO TOLERATE LOEFFLER, AT LEAST AS LONG AS THE PARTY'S FORTUNES APPEAR TO BE IMPROVING. ON THE SENAT FRONT, HOWEVER, A FEW CLOUDS ARE APPEARING. THE SENAT, WHICH DURING THE LAST SEVERAL MONTHS OF THE SCHUETZ ADMINISTRATION, WAS REPEATEDLY ROCKED BY SCANDALS INVOLVING PERSONNEL APPOINTMENTS (FILZOKRATIE) AND IN THE MISMANAGEMENT OF THE CITY-OWNED ENTERPRISES, HAS AT LEAST THREE NEW IRREGULARITIES TO DEAL WITH. ALL THREE DATE FROM THE PRVIOUS ADMINISTRATION, AND INVOLVE THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT ADMINISTRATION (BVG), AND THE CITY SANITATION DEPARTMENT. GOVERNING MAYOR STOBBE HAS DIRECTED HIS SENAT TO ATTACK THESE PROBLEMS HEAD-ON THEREBY HOPING TO MINIMIZE ANY POLITICAL DAMAGE WHICH MAY RESULT BY CONTINUING TO ASSUME THE POSTURE OF A DETERMINED REFORMER.
GEORGE

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